



THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

RURAL CONSULTATION PROCESSES

February 2006

VDOT Rural Consultation

INTRODUCTION

With the third largest state-maintained highway system, just behind North Carolina and Texas, and several of the largest public transportation systems and high-occupancy vehicle networks in the nation, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) play a major role in the transportation planning, programming, project development, and delivery processes in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Although VDOT and DRPT have longstanding practices for consulting with rural local officials during the transportation decision-making process, little documentation exists regarding how these practices have occurred and how they ideally should occur. Pursuant to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Final Rule on Statewide and Metropolitan Planning, this report reviews and documents VDOT and DRPT practices for consultation with rural local officials. VDOT and DRPT took advantage of this federal directive as an opportunity not only to document existing processes but also to identify opportunities to enhance interaction and consultation with rural local officials in the transportation decision-making process.

Federal Rule on Rural Local Consultation

On January 23, 2003, the USDOT's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration released a rule addressing the role of rural local officials in the statewide transportation planning process. This final rule amends the 1993 joint planning regulations and requires that states create and document a process, separate from the public involvement process, to consult with non-metropolitan local officials and provide for their participation in statewide transportation planning and programming. This action follows a joint effort by officials from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the National Association of Counties, and the National Association of Development Organizations that resulted in proposed compromise language to meet the concerns of state and local officials.

The final rule implements the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, PL 105-178) regarding the consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in the statewide and metropolitan planning processes. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, PL 109-59) continues these requirements.

The provisions of the final rule include the following within Section 450 of TEA-21:

- *Section 450.104 Definitions:*

Consultation means that one party confers with another identified party in accordance with an established process and, prior to taking action(s), considers that party's views and periodically informs that party about action(s) taken.

Non-metropolitan area means the geographic area outside designated metropolitan planning areas, as designated under 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303.

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Non-metropolitan local official means elected and appointed officials of general-purpose local government in non-metropolitan areas with jurisdiction/responsibility for transportation.

- *Section 450.206 Statewide transportation planning provisions: General Requirements*

Requires states to consider coordination with planning activities in non-metropolitan areas.

Also under this section, states shall consider, with respect to non-metropolitan areas, the concerns of local elected officials representing units of general-purpose local government.

- *Section 450.212 Public Involvement*

With regard to non-metropolitan local officials, the states shall have a documented process that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process “that provides an opportunity for their participation.”

Requires states to review and solicit comments from non-metropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 days regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and proposed modifications within 2 years of process implementation, and thereafter at least once every 5 years. A specific request for comments shall be directed to the state association of counties, state municipal league, or regional planning agencies or directly to non-metropolitan local officials.

The state, at its discretion, shall be responsible for determining whether to adopt proposed modifications. If a proposed modification is not adopted, the state shall make publicly available its reasons for not accepting the proposed modification, including notification to non-metropolitan local officials or their associations.

- *Section 450.214 Statewide Transportation Plan*

In developing the statewide transportation plan, affected local officials with responsibility for transportation shall be involved on a consultation basis for the portions of the plan in non-metropolitan areas of the state. As of January 2004, Virginia’s statewide transportation plan is formally known as Virginia’s statewide multimodal long-range transportation plan (VTrans2025).

- *Section 450.216 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program*

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In developing the statewide transportation improvement program, affected local officials with responsibility for transportation shall be involved on a consultation basis for the portions of the program in non-metropolitan areas of the state.

- *Section 450.224 Phase-in of new requirements*

The final rule provides for a phase-in of its provisions of one year after the effective date, which is February 24, 2003.

Overview of Virginia's Highway System

Composed of transportation facilities in urban and rural areas, Virginia's transportation system is a vital component of the state's economy, providing the safe and efficient movement of people and products throughout Virginia. VDOT is responsible for constructing, maintaining and operating the vast majority of the roads, bridges, and tunnels throughout the Commonwealth.

Virginia's highway system includes 57,516 miles of state-maintained roadways. In comparison, Virginia has 3,400 miles of rail track. The highway system is divided into the following categories:

- *Interstate:* 1,118 miles of four-to-ten-lane highways that connects states and major cities.
- *Primary:* 8,074 miles of two-to-eight-lane roads that connects cities and towns with each other and with interstates.
- *Secondary:* 47,993 miles of local connector or county roads. These generally are numbered 600 and above. Arlington and Henrico counties are responsible for the maintenance of the secondary roads within their jurisdictional boundaries.
- *Frontage:* 331 miles of frontage roads.

A separate system includes 10,491 miles of urban streets, maintained by cities and towns with the help of state funds. Virginia's cities are independent of its counties.

The transportation network in Virginia is composed of more than just asphalt and concrete travel lanes. VDOT is also responsible for the following:

- *More than 12,603 bridges.*
- *Four underwater crossings in the Hampton Roads area:* the mid-town and downtown Elizabeth River tunnels, the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel on I-64 and the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge-Tunnel on I-664.
- *Two mountain tunnels on I-77 in Southwest Virginia:* East River and Big Walker.

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- *Several toll facilities:* Northern Virginia's Dulles Toll Road and the Powhite Parkway Extension and the Pocahontas Parkway in the Richmond area.
- *One toll bridge:* The George P. Coleman Bridge carries Rt. 17 traffic over the York River between historic Yorktown and Gloucester County. Tolls are collected in the northbound direction only.
- *Four ferry services:* Jamestown, Sunnybank, Merry Point, and Hatton (seasonal).
- *Forty-one rest areas and 10 welcome centers along major highways.*
- *One hundred and seven commuter parking lots.*

Overview of CTB, VDOT and DRPT

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) guides VDOT's work, much like a board of directors. Virginia's Secretary of Transportation serves as chairman, and the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner as vice-chairman. The 17 board members are appointed by the Governor and approved by the General Assembly. The Director of the DRPT serves as a non-voting member of the board. Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.

VDOT has just over 9,300 employees, making it one of the three largest state agencies in Virginia. For the purposes of planning, constructing, and maintaining state and interstate highways, Virginia is divided into nine districts: Bristol, Culpeper, Fredericksburg, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, Northern Virginia, Richmond, Salem, and Staunton. (See Appendix A for a district map.) The districts are divided into 42 residencies and two district satellite offices, responsible for one to four counties each. Each of Virginia's counties has at least one area maintenance headquarters strategically located in it. The VDOT central office in Richmond is headquarters for approximately 30 operational and administrative units.

A number of organizational and procedural changes underway at VDOT will strengthen the planning and programming processes and customer service. For the past several years, VDOT has been decentralizing authority by moving personnel from the central office to the districts. This has allowed staff and appropriate functions to be closer to the customers they serve. VDOT is also moving toward a more closely linked planning and programming process with an emphasis on early public involvement during the planning phase. The public hearings for the FY 2007-2012 Six-Year Improvement Program are highlighting the project development process and the role each phase of this process entails: planning, programming, implementation and construction.

The DRPT consists of 44 employees and is also guided by the CTB. DRPT's three primary disciplines of rail, public transportation and ridesharing focus on the movement of

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people and goods. DRPT works closely with VDOT and other state agencies responsible for other modes of transportation, such as aviation and ports.

RURAL CONSULTATION METHODS USED BY VDOT

VDOT uses a variety of methods to consult with local officials in rural areas, encompassing both informal and formal techniques that range from simple daily communication from VDOT's resident engineers and transportation planners to rural officials to public hearings for the SYIP. Specifically, the following vehicles are used:

- The Rural Transportation Planning Program (RTTP)
- Transportation technical committees
- Local government public forums
- Consultation during programming
- Use of the Internet
- Informal activities

Rural Transportation Planning Program

The RTTP is funded with State Planning and Research (SPR) funds, which are the federal allocation for transportation planning and research within Virginia. The RTTP has two components: the Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program (Assistance Program) and the Rural Transportation Planning Grant Program (Grant Program). The RTTP is not a state or federally mandated program and is carried out at VDOT's discretion. The purpose of the Assistance Program is to provide funding to planning district commissions (PDCs) to carry out transportation planning activities in rural areas. A PDC is eligible to receive RTTP funds if it encompasses rural areas, defined as areas "outside the metropolitan study area boundaries approved by the metropolitan planning organizations" under Section 134 of Title 23 of the United States Code. A map depicting the geographical boundaries for the 21 PDCs is provided in Appendix B.

Under the RTTP program, PDCs develop, in consultation with VDOT and localities, regional long range plans for transportation. These plans conform to the requirements similar to the program federally mandated for the metropolitan planning process. The plans would contain a 20-year planning horizon and five year update cycle and serve as a tool for providing a regional perspective on transportation issues and strategies for local governments in rural areas.

The Grant Program provides the non-metropolitan localities that comprise each PDC with additional opportunities to develop and participate in rural transportation planning activities beyond those funded under the Assistance Program. Funding for the grant program is obtained through a competitive process.

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Transportation Technical Committees

VDOT staff regularly attends and participates in transportation technical committee meetings coordinated by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional PDCs. Currently, most of the PDCs receiving RTPP funds in Virginia have established a rural transportation technical committee. It is anticipated by fiscal year 2007 all PDCs will have a rural transportation technical committee. These technical committees are composed of rural local officials and staff. Their meetings serve as a forum in which regional transportation issues are discussed and provide an opportunity for VDOT to present information and get feedback on statewide, regional, and local transportation planning issues.

Local Public Forums

VDOT resident engineers attend county board of supervisors meetings and town council meetings, when requested, to inform local officials about maintenance and construction projects.

Consultation During Programming

Rural localities are formally consulted during the development of the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP), the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the Secondary Six-Year Plan.

SYIP Public Hearings

The Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP), as discussed in detail later in this document and described on VDOT's Website at <http://viriniadot.org/projects/default.asp>, is a "listing of all proposed and under construction projects as well as studies slated for the next six years". Each year, the CTB holds public hearings for the SYIP in each of VDOT's nine construction districts across the state. These hearings provide an opportunity for the general public and local and state officials to provide input regarding the tentative SYIP. Rural local officials use these hearings to provide input on proposed transportation improvements and critical needs on the primary and interstate highway systems and on rail, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

STIP Development/SYIP

The STIP is a federally required document that, in Virginia, is based on the SYIP. The STIP identifies funding obligations for the preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction phases of project development. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the FHWA determines Virginia's obligation authority, from which VDOT requests obligation amounts for preliminary engineering, right of way, and construction. Historically, the information in this programming document and the SYIP has not been readily available in electronic format. To improve public access to this important programming information and to facilitate and improve

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upon the processes used to develop the SYIP and STIP, VDOT is developing a web-based application called iSYIP, which stands for the integrated Six-Year Improvement Program. Rural local officials, PDCs, and the general public will be able to use this application to retrieve project and funding information.

Secondary Six-Year Plan

The Secondary Six-Year Plan shows proposed road improvements for the next six years on the secondary system. The development of the plan is a partnership between VDOT and local governments, including non-metropolitan officials. The county board of supervisors, in consultation with VDOT resident engineers, identifies and approves for each county projects on the secondary road system to be included in the plan.

Use of the Internet

The Internet has become a valuable tool for sharing information with local officials and the general public. VDOT's website (www.virginiadot.org) includes links to small urban area studies, the iSYIP, and the State Multimodal Transportation Plan. To find information regarding small urban area studies, citizens and local public officials can access the plan summaries and interactive maps depicting recommendations and can submit comments for each study. The iSYIP provides an overview of projects in the preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction stages and allows external customers to view details (e.g., location, estimates, funding) for any of the thousands of projects scheduled for construction or currently being constructed. The statewide multimodal link provides information regarding project schedules, public involvement opportunities, status reports, and monthly meeting summaries for VDOT's Policy Committee. In addition, interested stakeholders can contact a State Multimodal Transportation Plan representative through an e-mail link or toll-free telephone number.

Informal Activities

VDOT carries out a number of informal undocumented rural consultation processes. For example, VDOT resident engineers have daily contact with local officials regarding transportation issues and projects in their respective jurisdictions. In addition, transportation planners at VDOT regularly answer inquiries and provide information to their counterparts in rural and urban jurisdictions, by email and phone.

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RURAL CONSULTATION OPPORTUNITIES

The development of the following transportation plans offer opportunities for rural consultation:

- Statewide Highway Plan
- Statewide Transportation Plan
- Regional Long-Range Plans for Transportation
- Planning for Rail and Public Transportation and Human Services Transportation Coordination
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Rail and Public Transportation Six-Year Program

Statewide Highway Plan

The Statewide Highway Plan, a 20-year long-range plan that is periodically developed by VDOT's Transportation & Mobility Planning Division, outlines needed highway improvements on the statewide network of interstate and primary routes.

The purpose of the Statewide Highway Plan is to recommend improvements that are needed to accommodate existing and future capacity and to address geometric and safety deficiencies. A number of elements are combined in developing the plan, including MPO plans from urbanized areas, small urban area transportation studies, and Regional Long-Range Plan recommendations. Local officials have opportunities to participate in the development of each of these components. The State Highway Plan is presented during planning and programming meetings across the state prior to its adoption by VDOT.

The following provides a brief description of the components of the State Highway Plan.

Small Urban Area Transportation Studies

This statewide effort involves the development of long-range transportation plans for 44 small urban areas (towns and cities with populations, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2,500 and 50,000). The plans address transportation issues and identify travel needs in each community, and have a planning horizon of at least 20 years. Although the primary focus of each plan is the thoroughfare highway system, which consists of arterial and collector roads, the plans also address local needs and alternative modes of transportation. This long-range study identifies future transportation needs in each locality, helps to identify funding requirements, prioritizes future investment decisions, coordinates local needs with state highway improvement plans, and involves the public in the transportation planning process.

Each study involves a minimum of four meetings between VDOT staff, consultant staff, elected officials, and rural local jurisdiction staff. At the initial meetings, VDOT emphasizes

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that the development of the small urban area transportation plans are based on a truly collaborative process. Every transportation plan is developed as part of a structured approach with five basic components:

1. Data collection
2. Forecasting future travel demand
3. Development of recommendations to meet current and future transportation needs
4. Coordination and involvement of rural local officials and the public
5. Environmental overview and plan documentation

All small urban area transportation studies are available via the internet through a link provided on VDOT's website at www.virginiadot.org.

Regional Long-Range Plans (RLRP) for Transportation

RLRPs are developed in coordination with VDOT, PDCs, and localities and contain highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, operational, and freight recommendations for areas of the state not covered by an MPO or within a small urban study area. Roadway improvements identified in these plans feed into the State Highway Plan.

The Regional Long-Range Plans:

- Cover roadways functionally classified major collectors and above
- Identify operational improvements (intersection improvements, access management strategies, signalization, turning lanes, roundabouts, etc.)
- Determine the location and potential impact of high growth areas (residential, retail and distribution) using local comprehensive land use plans
- Identify critical freight infrastructure and routes, and associated improvements
- Target facilities for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Identify corridors to preserve right-of-way for future transportation improvements
- Identify potential setback requirements for corridors for local enforcement
- Determine potential zoning or corridor overlay tools for local use
- Outline the need for on-demand transit services and
- Allow for local and regional feedback with transportation planners on planned projects and further the rural consultation efforts of VDOT.

Statewide Transportation Plan

During the development of the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, rural local officials are provided a number of opportunities to participate in the process and provide input. Meetings with citizens, local officials, and business representatives are held across the state to solicit input and reach consensus on a long-range vision for transportation in Virginia. Participants are asked to complete a survey, which ascertains the respondent's vision and priorities for transportation in the future and solicits feedback on transportation programs and policies. Based on these meetings, a supplemental survey may be developed to target specific

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stakeholder groups, including local elected officials. Existing forums, such as conferences for the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal League, are used to present information on the multimodal plan effort, solicit input, and distribute the supplemental surveys. Although specific future outreach activities have not been formalized, PDCs have been asked to assist with the development and implementation of outreach activities that can be targeted to receive input from local elected officials.

DRPT Planning for Rail and Public Transportation and Human Services Transportation Coordination

DRPT also provides planning, financial, and technical advice and assistance to local governments and regional agencies to support rail freight projects, public transportation programs, and human service agency transportation coordination. DRPT administers federal and state financial assistance programs to support planning, technical studies, operations, and capital improvement programs for public transportation systems and transportation demand management agencies. DRPT also administers the Federal Transit Act Section 5310 Program that provides capital assistance to human service agencies. Federal and state financial assistance programs are administered by DRPT to support rail industrial access projects requested by localities, and rail capital improvements for short line railroads. Staff from DRPT meet regularly with local officials in rural areas of the state that operate public transportation programs and with local officials who are interested in starting public transportation or transportation demand management programs. In addition, staff meets with local officials that have expressed interest in rail industrial access projects and with officials of the short-line railroads to discuss needs and projects.

DRPT participates in a statewide coordinating council that focuses on coordinating transportation and developing inter-agency cooperation as it relates to coordinating human services and public transportation services. This council includes representatives of other state agencies including, but not limited to, education, social services, aging, and mental health.

DRPT also conducts studies and administers contracts to support rail passenger improvements across the Commonwealth. Local governments are consulted routinely and included in advisory committees for the study processes.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

Virginia's STIP is composed of all highway, rail, and transit projects anticipated to receive federal funding obligation in the next four years. Federally funded projects from the Virginia Transportation Six-Year Program for Construction and Development (i.e., the SYIP), each MPO's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and Secondary Six-Year Plans are used to compile the STIP. As discussed previously, rural local officials are consulted during the development of the SYIP and Secondary Six-Year Plans. The processes for developing these elements of the STIP are outlined here and shown in detail in Appendix C:

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Six-Year Improvement Program

The creation of the SYIP can be summarized through ten steps:

1. *Forecasting Revenue.* Anticipated revenues are determined based on the current federal authorization program, SAFTEA-LU.
2. *Developing the Six-Year Budget.* The amount of funding available for allocation to the SYIP is determined.
3. *Developing Planning and Engineering Estimates.* Cost estimates are developed for each project in the SYIP.
4. *Drafting the SYIP.* A revised copy of the previous SYIP is used to prepare the new SYIP.
5. *Holding SYIP Pre-Allocation Hearings.* Concurrent with the development of the draft SYIP, the CTB conducts a planning and programming meeting in each of VDOT's nine construction districts. These meetings provide an opportunity for citizens and elected officials to provide input into the draft program by helping the CTB prioritize interstate, urban, primary, and transit projects.
6. *Conducting Agency Review.* VDOT leadership reviews the draft program, and any necessary changes are incorporated into the program.
7. *Conducting CTB Review of Program.* The draft SYIP is reviewed by each district administrator and his or her respective CTB member.
8. *Developing Tentative SYIP and Soliciting Public Comment via Internet.* After revisions based on agency and CTB review and comments from the public and elected officials are incorporated into the draft SYIP, the tentative SYIP is made available for public comment via the Internet at www.virginiadot.org.
9. *Holding Final Public Hearing.* Final allocation hearings are held in two locations throughout the state: one covering western locations and one covering eastern locations.
10. *Obtaining CTB Approval.* The CTB formally approves the SYIP, which is then posted on the Internet at www.virginiadot.org.

MPO TIPs

Although MPO activities are by definition not part of the rural planning process, these activities as they affect the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are included in this

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document because with some counties having both MPO and rural areas, there may be opportunities for coordination between MPO and rural activities within a given county.

The metropolitan TIP development process begins prior to CTB preallocation hearings for the SYIP. Each MPO, in consultation with VDOT staff, develops a preliminary draft TIP based on anticipated revisions to the current TIP. The MPO solicits public involvement in the development of the preliminary draft TIP and uses this information to develop the MPO's statement of priorities for the preallocation hearings. Following adoption of the SYIP by the CTB, the MPOs begin developing their draft TIP. Once the adopted SYIP is acquired and a draft TIP is compiled, it is reviewed and approved by the MPO technical committee. Following MPO approval by the technical committee, the MPO policy committee is provided with a draft TIP. If the MPO policy committee approves the TIP, it is released for public review in accordance with each MPO's adopted public involvement procedures (the public comment period must last for at least 30 days, in accordance with federal regulations). Subsequently, air quality conformity testing in MPOs designated as air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas is initiated. Conformity testing takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete, at which time the conformity analysis must be approved by the technical committee and MPO. Public review of the air conformity analysis lasts for two weeks (30 days in Northern Virginia), and public comments are considered in the MPO's approval of the final TIP. Once the TIP is finalized, it is forwarded to VDOT, which submits it to the Governor for approval. Approved metropolitan TIPs are subsequently included in the state's STIP submittal.

Secondary Six-Year Plan

The process of developing Secondary Six-Year Plans is a partnership between VDOT and local governments in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. County boards of supervisors identify and prioritize new secondary road projects based on funding projections provided by the state. VDOT implements projects in accordance with local priorities and ensures that adequate funding is available to meet funding requirements for individual project phases. The resident engineer is VDOT's designated representative for this process. State legislation requires the creation and biennial update of a Secondary Six-Year Plan for each county in Virginia.

The process begins with a meeting between VDOT and the county, where the resident engineer provides recommendations for projects to be included in the Secondary Six-Year Plan. These secondary projects may come from current VDOT improvement programs, citizen requests, requests by the county, and needs identified by VDOT. The board of supervisors establishes project priorities, and VDOT residency staff prepares a draft Secondary Six-Year Plan. At that time, a draft is available for public review at <http://syip.virginiadot.org>, and a public hearing is held to allow for citizen input on the plan and budget. Following the public hearings, the board of supervisors formally establishes project priorities by adopting a resolution approving the project list and budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Once the Secondary Six-Year Plan is completed for each county and administrative determinations are made regarding the type

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of funding applicable to each project, the plan becomes a component of the STIP. Appendix D is a flowchart depicting the process.

Rail and Public Transportation Six-Year Program

The process of developing the Rail and Public Transportation Six-Year Program is a partnership among DRPT, local governments, public transportation officials, transportation demand management program operators, and human service agencies. Each year in December, DRPT advertises in newspapers across the state the availability of state and federal grant funds for public transportation, transportation demand management, and human service agency programs. Local officials for existing programs and prospective new programs apply via DRPT's On-line Grant Application (OLGA) system, available at <http://olga.drpt.virginia.gov/>. DRPT staff members are available to answer questions and to assist applicants with the on-line application process. Grants are awarded for the fiscal year beginning in July of the following year. In a similar manner (not yet on-line), capital improvement grants are awarded each year to Virginia's short-line railroads under the state Rail Preservation Program. Local officials for existing public transportation programs also are asked for estimates of capital projects to be undertaken in each of the following six years. Tentative allocations (not grants) of federal and state funds to help support these projects are included in the Six-Year Program. All rail and public transportation grants and the tentative allocations of future revenues are included in the CTB's SYIP approved in June of each year.

RURAL FUNDING AND DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

VDOT provides rural local officials with direct decision-making authority in selecting transportation improvement projects for the secondary and urban (cities and towns with a population of 3,500 or more outside MPO areas) systems.

In addition to the funds for the aforementioned Secondary Six-Year Program, rural areas of Virginia are eligible to receive funding under several VDOT programs, including the following:

- Rural Rustic Roads Program
- Revenue Sharing Program
- Recreational Access Program
- Industrial, Airport, and Rail Access Program (Roadway Portion)

Rural Rustic Roads Program

Under this program, a county has the option of designating particular low-volume roads with low-density development as a "rural rustic road" where the county agrees to limit growth along the road through zoning and planning. In addition to having between 50 and 500 vehicles per day, the road should be within the VDOT secondary system, should be a priority in the SYIP,

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and should serve the local population. In return, VDOT can maintain the roadway by paving within the ditchlines (thereby requiring less right of way) and not necessarily maintaining the road to minimum design standards. In short, the idea behind the program is that for these roads, both maintenance costs and environmental impacts may be significantly reduced; the tradeoff is that some improvements that would be necessary for higher volume roads (or roads with higher density abutting them) are not made. For example, six pilot sites were paved at a cost of \$325,818 in four months; VDOT estimates that had those sites been constructed and engineered in accordance with conventional standards, the cost would have been \$3.28 million and construction would have taken between two and six years.

Revenue Sharing Program

This program enables localities to contribute matching funds that enable a project, whose cost exceeds available funds, to be completed earlier than would be the case were one required to wait until all funds are available. In such cases, the county contributes half the additional funds that are needed and VDOT contributes the other half of the needed funds. Projects are eligible if they are on the primary or secondary system, although the entire program is capped at \$10 million per fiscal year.

State Planning and Research Funds for Rural Areas

VDOT regularly provides \$48,000 annually in SPR funds to each eligible PDC in order to carry out transportation planning activities in rural areas. The PDCs are required to provide a 20 percent match to the SPR funds, which results in \$60,000 total.

Recreational Access Program

This program provides funds for recreational access roads or bikeways that make a “publicly developed recreational area or historic site” accessible, provided such a site is not private or federally maintained.¹ The main purpose of the project is to make these recreational or historic sites accessible as opposed to creating solely a new transportation facility; e.g., a bikeway funded under this program might connect an area having heavy bicycle traffic to a park that presently is not accessible to cyclists. This program is authorized by § 33.1-223 of the *Code of Virginia*; details are available at <http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp>

Industrial, Airport, and Rail Access Program (Roadway Portion)

Section 33.1-221 of the *Code of Virginia* authorizes this program, which provides access to employment centers.² This access may entail providing improvements to an existing facility (e.g., widening a turn bay to accommodate heavy vehicles) or providing a new facility, although in both cases the emphasis is on providing access to an existing industrial site as opposed to

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facilitating land development. (Each project is limited to \$300,000 unless the town, city, or county provides matching funds; under that scenario, VDOT can provide up to an additional \$150,000 provided the amount is matched by the city, county, or town.) Details of this program are available on pp. 13-14 of

<http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp>

RURAL CONSULTATION IN VIRGINIA—LOOKING AHEAD

Virginia recognizes that consultation with rural local officials is paramount to the success of our transportation plans and programs. VDOT and DRPT will continue to work with rural local governments and other partners to continue to enhance opportunities for access and input to the transportation planning and programming processes.

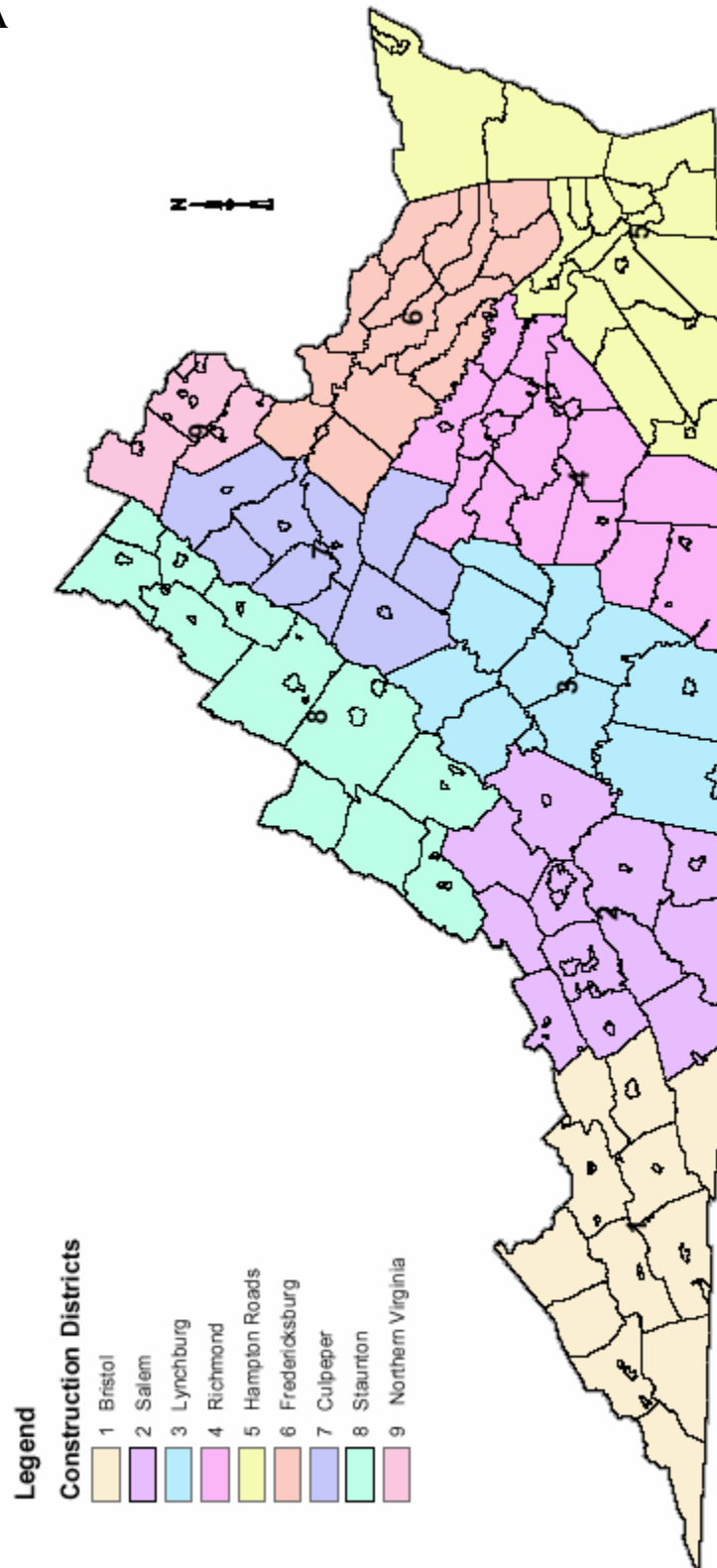
Federal regulations direct state departments of transportation to review the processes used to gather and assess input from rural local officials within two years of implementation and every five years thereafter. In September 2005, the Virginia Department of Transportation conducted a 60-day review period and sought the feedback of officials in counties, cities and towns across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Based on comments received, VDOT and DRPT modified the rural consultation process outlined in this document. This process will be repeated every five years in accordance with federal regulations, although a request for feedback may be issued by VDOT in the interim if conditions warrant a review of the consultation methods.

REFERENCES

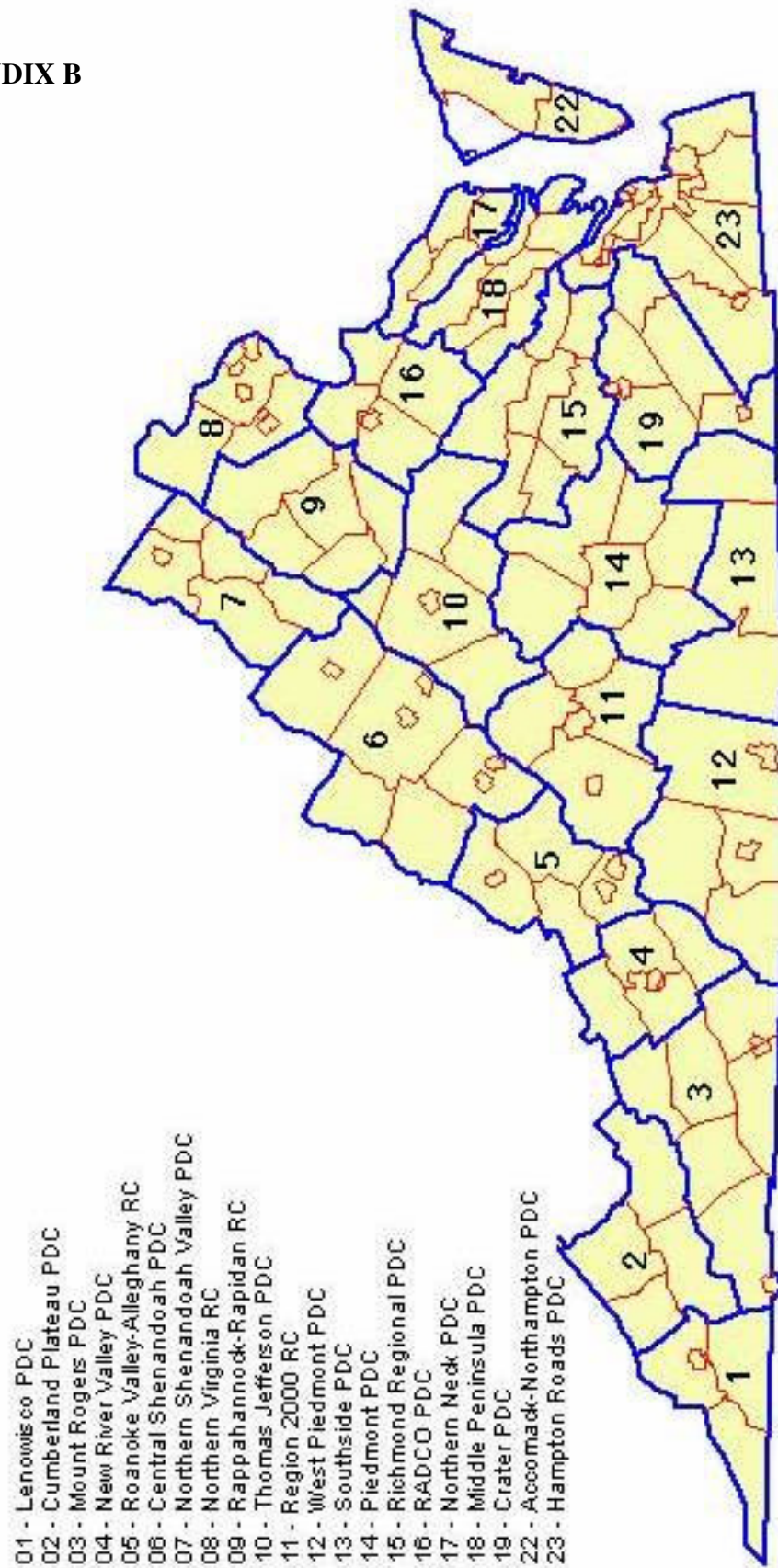
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<http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp>
2. Virginia Department of Transportation, Secondary Roads Division. *Guide for the Industrial Access Program*, Richmond, 2002. Available at:
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see pp. 13-14.

APPENDIX A

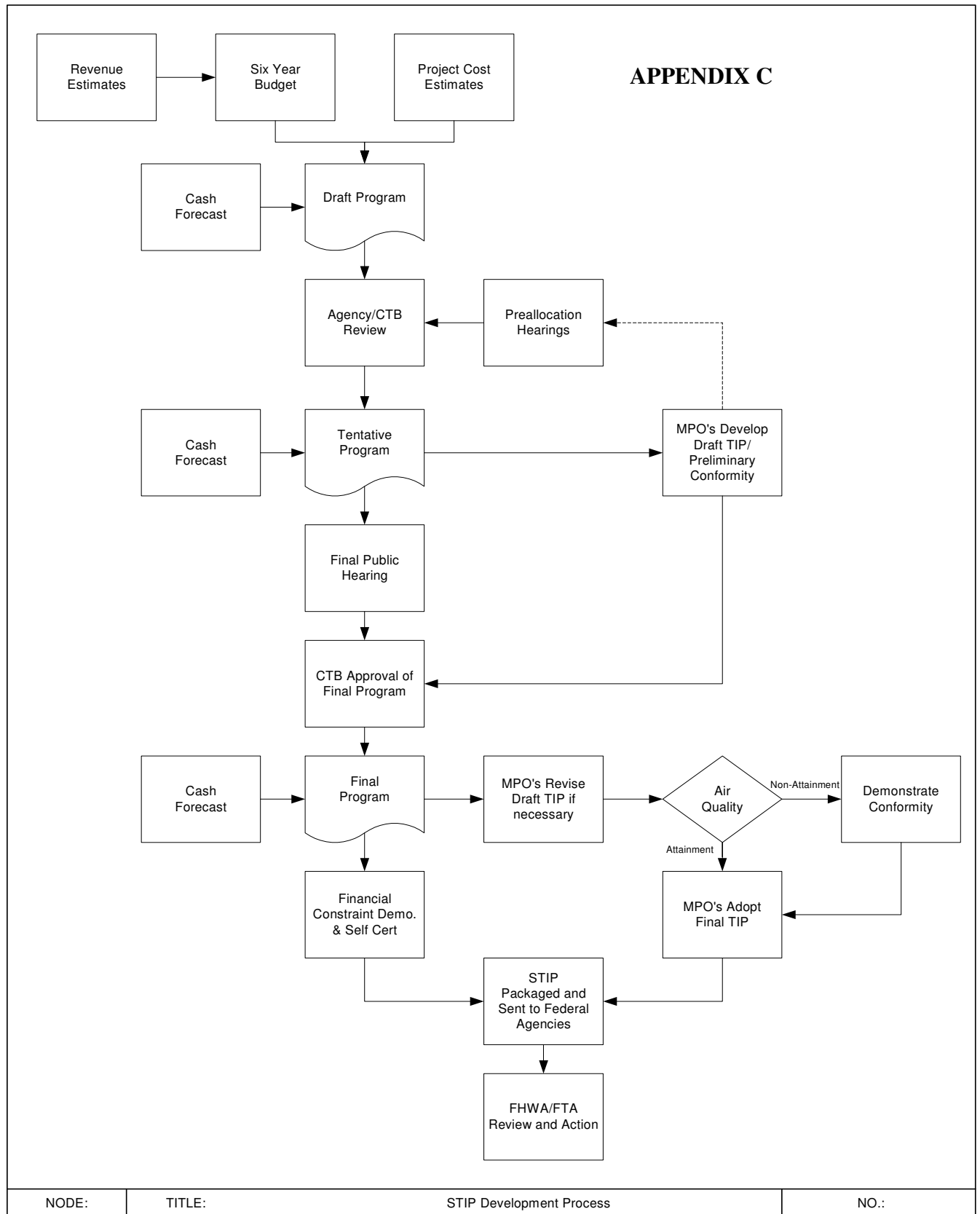
Construction Districts



APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C



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